

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

In the Claims:

1-22 (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

(a) including in a lemon/lime flavored beverage an acidulant system consisting of (i) citric acid and (ii) adipic acid having a smaller dissociation constant than citric acid; and

(b) increasing the pH of the lemon/lime flavored beverage to between about 3.2 and about 3.8 by including in the lemon/lime flavored beverage a buffer salt system consisting of a citrate salt and a phosphate salt,

wherein the ratio by weight of said adipic acid : said citric acid is 1 : 15 to 1 : 3, and wherein the ~~stability of the~~ lemon/lime flavor of the beverage maintains an acceptable flavor and remains tart for at least seven months following manufacture, is improved by increasing the pH of the lemon/lime flavored beverage while also maintaining or increasing the tartness of the beverage over the same beverage without said ratio of said adipic acid to said citric acid.

24. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

(a) including in a lemon/lime flavored beverage an acidulant system consisting of (i) a combination of phosphoric acid and citric acid and (ii) adipic acid having a smaller dissociation constant than both phosphoric acid and citric acid; and

(b) increasing the pH of the lemon/lime flavored beverage to between about 3.2 and about 3.8 by including in the lemon/lime flavored beverage a buffer salt system consisting of a citrate salt and a phosphate salt,

wherein the ratio by weight of said adipic acid : said phosphoric acid : said citric acid is 3.0-4.0 : 1.4-2.0 : 1.0, and wherein the ~~stability of the~~ lemon/lime flavor of the beverage

maintains an acceptable flavor and remains tart for at least seven months following manufacture,
~~is improved by increasing the pH of the lemon/lime flavored beverage while also maintaining or~~
~~increasing the tartness of the beverage over the same beverage without said ratio of said adipic~~
~~acid to said phosphoric acid to said citric acid.~~

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the ratio by weight of the adipic acid : citric acid is 1 :10 to 1: 4.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the ratio by weight of the adipic acid : phosphoric acid: citric acid is 3.3-3.7 : 1.6-1.8 : 1.0.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the citric acid is present in an amount from about 0.18-0.24% based on finished lemon/lime flavored beverage weight.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27, wherein the citric acid is present in an amount from about 0.19-0.23% based on finished lemon/lime flavored beverage weight.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are independently selected from the group consisting of sodium, potassium and calcium salts.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are independently selected from the group consisting of mono-, di- and tri-ionic salts.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23 or claim 24, wherein the ratio by

weight of citrate salt : phosphate salt is from 1 : 2 to 2 : 1.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the ratio by weight of citrate salt : phosphate salt is 1 : 1.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are present in a combined amount of about 0.04-0.18% by weight of finished lemon/lime flavored beverage.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are present in a combined amount of about 0.05-0.15% by weight of finished lemon/lime flavored beverage.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are present in a combined amount of about 0.25-0.41% by weight of finished lemon/lime flavored beverage.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the citrate salt and the phosphate salt are present in a combined amount of about 0.3-0.36% by weight of finished lemon/lime flavored beverage:

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the lemon/lime flavored beverage is a lemon/lime flavored carbonated soft drink.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the lemon/lime flavored beverage is a lemon/lime flavored cola beverage.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the lemon/lime flavored

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beverage is a lemon/lime flavored cola beverage.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the lemon/lime flavored beverage is a lemon/lime flavored carbonated soft drink.